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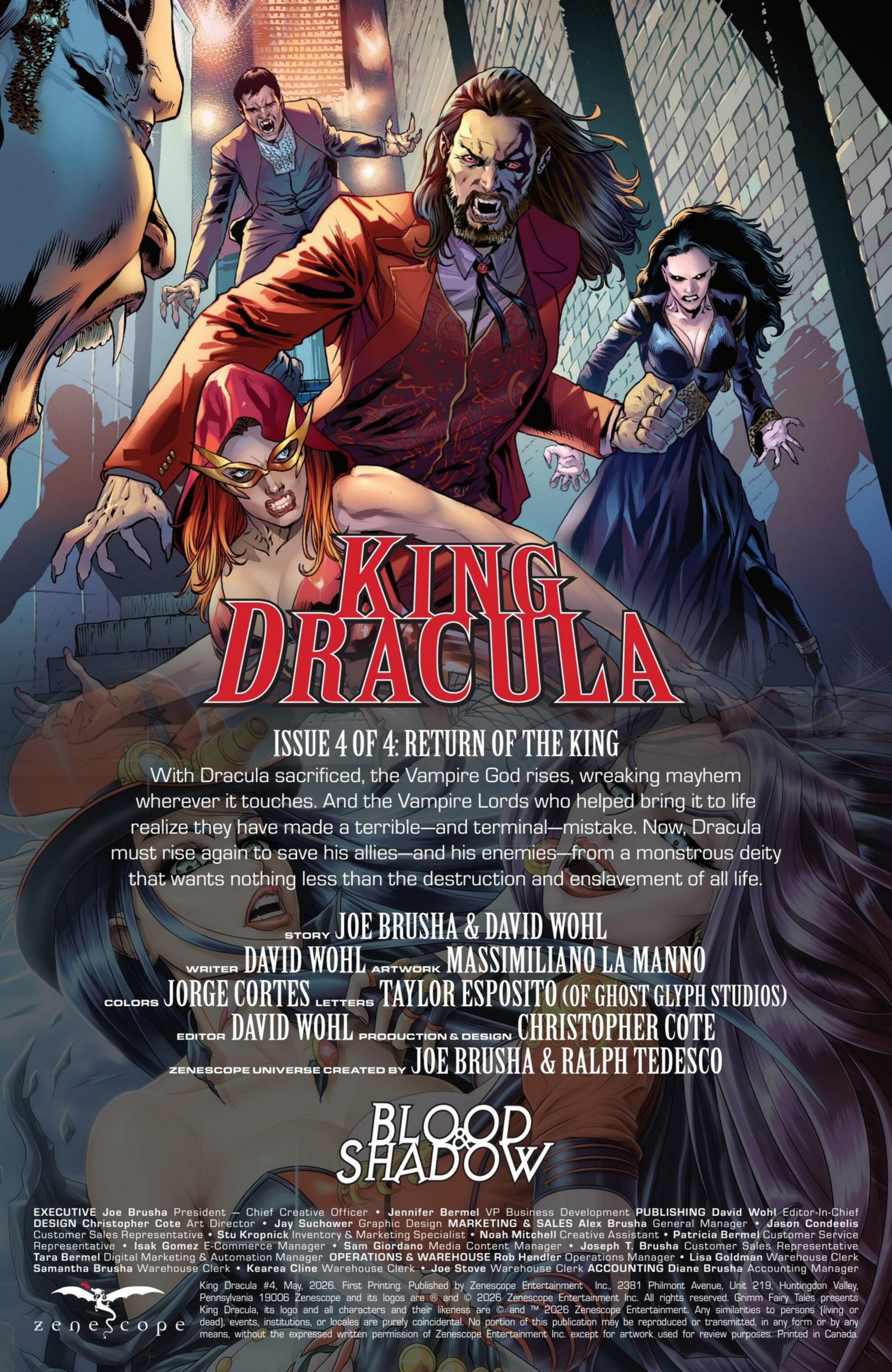
4

KING DRACULA



RETURN OF THE KING

WOHL • LA MANNO • CORTES • ESPOSITO



KING DRACULA

ISSUE 4 OF 4: RETURN OF THE KING

With Dracula sacrificed, the Vampire God rises, wreaking mayhem wherever it touches. And the Vampire Lords who helped bring it to life realize they have made a terrible—and terminal—mistake. Now, Dracula must rise again to save his allies—and his enemies—from a monstrous deity that wants nothing less than the destruction and enslavement of all life.

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Manhattan. Upper West Side.
4:45 AM

I MUST ADMIT, THIS WAS DEFINITELY NOT IN MY PLANS FOR THE EVENING.

SHUFFLING DOWN 104TH STREET WHILST BEING CHIDED BY ONE OF MY OLDEST ENEMIES...

HURRY, LIESEL!

MADKRAKE

...CHARLOTTE LE FANU, THE DAUGHTER OF DRACULA.

AAGGHH--IT'S HAPPENING!

WE NEED TO MOVE FASTER, DAMMIT!

!GASP!...
YEAH...
!GASP!...
YEAH...

EASY FOR HER TO SAY. SHE HAS VAMPIRE BLOOD COURSEING THROUGH HER VEINS.

DRACULA'S BLOOD, SPECIFICALLY.

AND SINCE HIS RETURN TO EARTH, SHE'S HAD SOME SORT OF PSYCHIC CONNECTION WITH HIM.

THEY ATTEMPTED TO USE HIS BLOOD FOR SOME KIND OF RITUAL SACRIFICE.

I RESCUED HIM...
RELUCTANTLY.

INSTEAD OF FLEEING TO SAFETY, DRACULA STAYED AND CREATED AN ARMY OF VAMP MINIONS TO TAKE REVENGE ON HIS ERSTWHILE CAPTORS.

APPARENTLY HE DIDN'T SUCCEED...

WE NEED TO GET THERE BEFORE...

HE WAS ABDUCTED BY A DAFT GROUP OF MONSTERS CALLING THEMSELVES THE "VAMPIRE LORDS."

...IT'S TOO LATE.

BLOODY HELL.

...THE LORDS MUST'VE BROUGHT HIM HERE, TO THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOHN THE DIVINE, TO BEGIN THEIR CEREMONY ANEW.

CHARLOTTE AND I WERE TRYING TO GET HERE BEFORE THEY COULD FINISH THE RITUAL.

BUT IF THIS... CHAOS... IS ANY INDICATION, WE FAILED.

AND SOMETHING CALLED THE "RED GOD" HAS RISEN.

IF THAT'S TRUE, HEAVEN HELP US ALL.

WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING OVER THERE?

YAAAAGGHH!

PAM

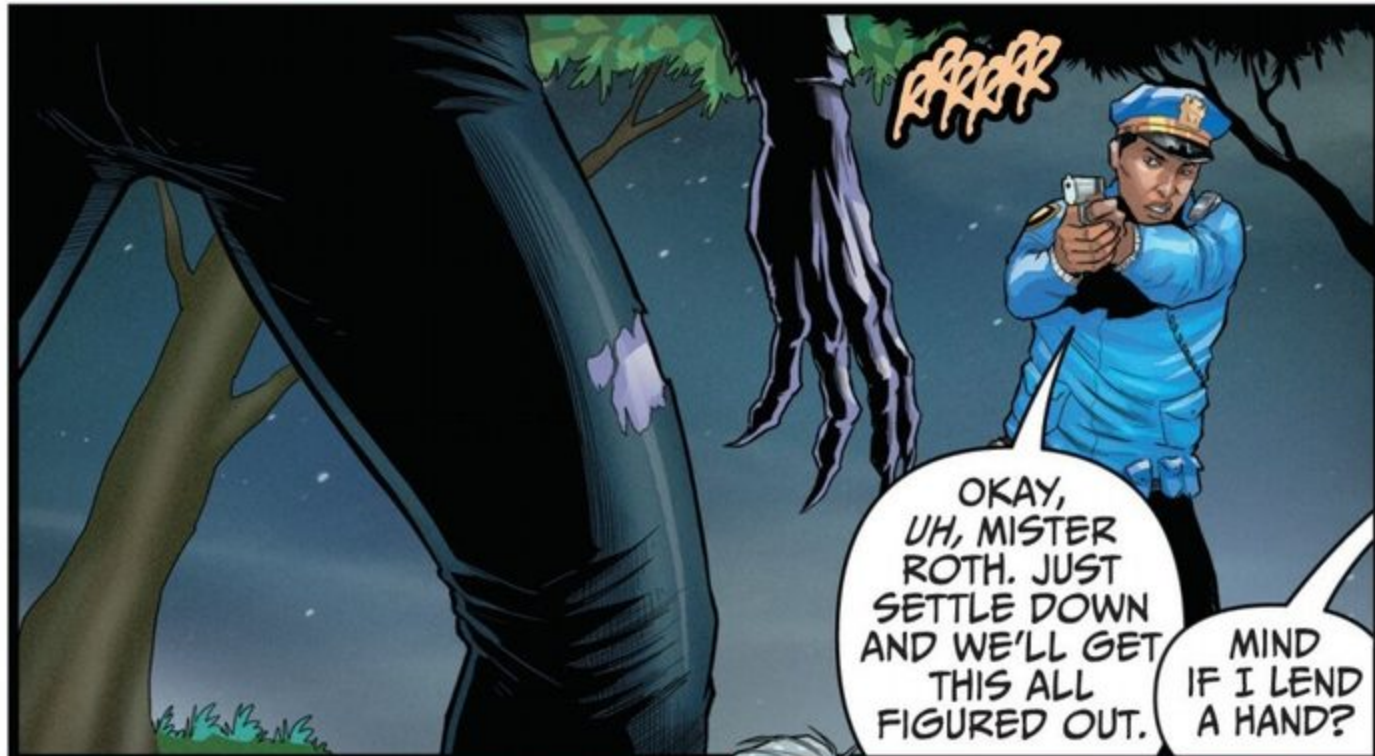
JUST STAY CALM, VINCE. WE'LL GET HELP.





OFFICER A7237 TO
BASE. WE HAVE AN
OFFICER DOWN ON
112TH AND AMSTERDAM.
REQUESTING BACK
UP AND A BUS.

BASE,
COME IN!
DAMMIT!



OKAY,
UH, MISTER
ROTH. JUST
SETTLE DOWN
AND WE'LL GET
THIS ALL
FIGURED OUT.

MIND
IF I LEND
A HAND?



WHO THE
HELL ARE
Y--

DON'T WORRY
ABOUT ME RIGHT
NOW. JUST KEEP
YOUR EYES ON...
ROTH, IS IT?

I'M NOT
SURE YOUR
FRIEND IS
IN THERE
ANYMORE.



HEY!



THANKS.

NO PROBLEM.
YOU TWO WERE...
ACQUAINTED?

HE WAS
SORTA MY
BOSS. CITY
COUNCILMAN
EDWARD
ROTH.



OFFERED MY PARTNER
AND I A SHITLOAD OF
CASH UNDER THE TABLE
TO STAND GUARD OUT HERE
FOR THE NIGHT.

WE THOUGHT HE
WAS HOSTING A RAVE
OR SOMETHING, BUT A
FEW MINUTES AGO WE
STARTED SEEING THIS
WEIRD LIGHT, AND HE
CAME OUT THE DOOR...
CHANGED. HE...LUNGED
AT VINCE.

SHIT, I
GOTTA GO
CHECK ON
VINCE. WHERE'S
THE DAMNED
BUS?

LIESEL...



WE NEED TO
GET IN THERE
NOW.



I'LL BE BACK
AS SOON AS
I CAN TO
HELP.

DO WHAT
YOU GOTTA DO.
I'LL KEEP TRYIN'
TO GET HELP.
HOPEFULLY THE
WORST IS
OVER.

DON'T HAVE THE HEART
TO TELL HIM THE
TRUTH--THAT IF THEY
HAVE, IN FACT, KILLED
DRACULA AND RAISED
THE RED GOD...



...THIS IS FAR FROM OVER...

IS HE ALIVE?

BARELY. AND NOT FOR LONG.



WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.



THAT CREATURE GROWS EVER STRONGER. THANKFULLY, FOR NOW, ITS ATTENTION IS ON THOSE TWO SYCOPHANTS.



WELCOME TO THIS WORLD, GREAT VRYKOLAKAS.



HOW MAY WE SERVE YOU?

WE ARE YOURS TO COMMAND.



HOW GRACIOUS, BUT ONLY THE FITTEST SHALL SERVE AT MY SIDE.

SO SHOW ME...



...WHICH OF YOU LOVES ME MORE?

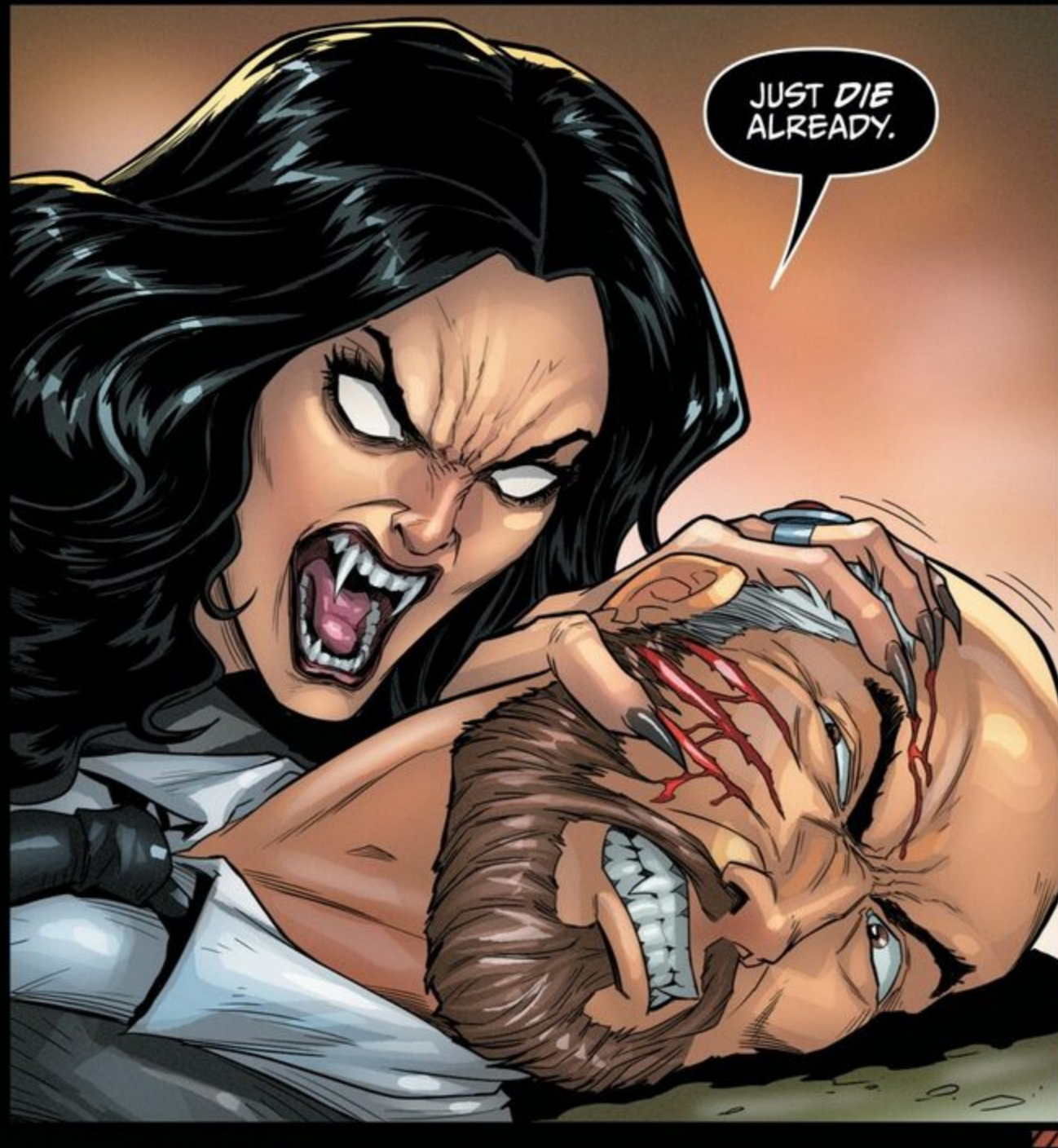
YOU KNOW, I NEVER LIKED YOU, MARCUS...



SO GODDAMMED PATRONIZING.



SISHHHH



JUST DIE ALREADY.



ENOUGH!

YOU'RE NOTHING TO ME, BELLA. YOU'RE WEAK!



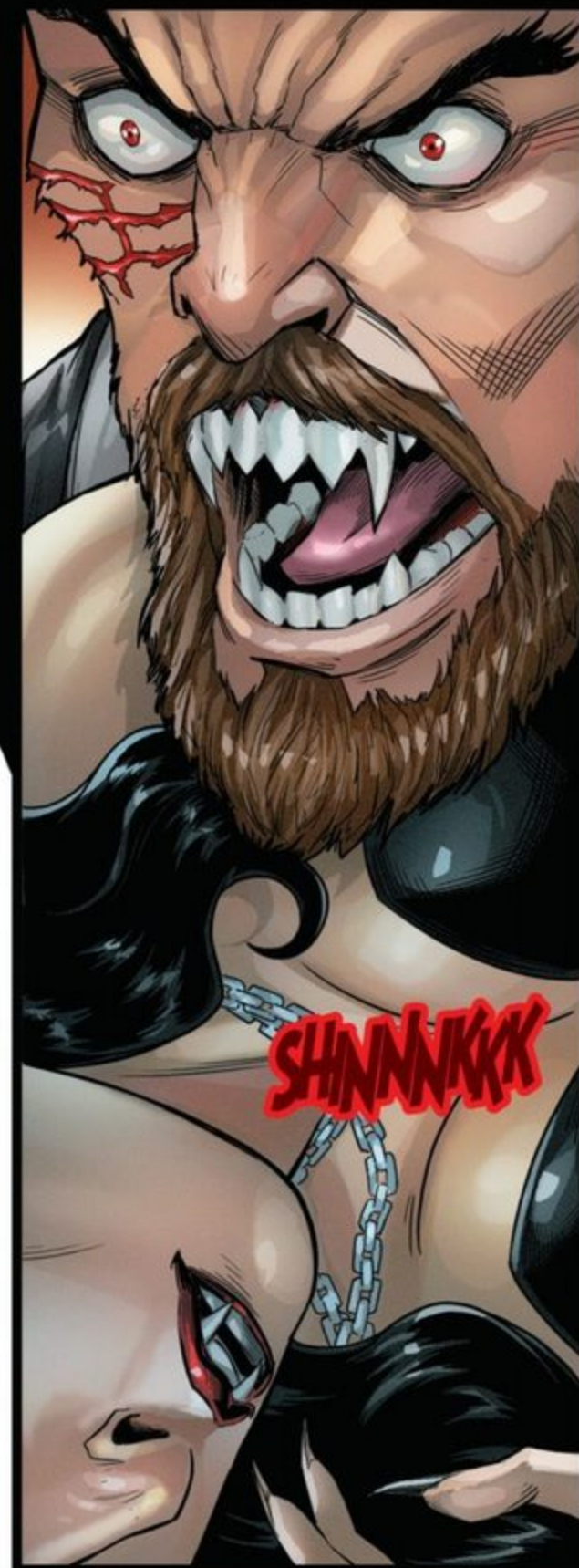


YOU ALWAYS DID
HAVE TOO HIGH OF
AN OPINION OF
YOURSELF, BELLA.
YOU AND THE
OTHERS.

THINKING OF
YOURSELVES
AS MY
EQUALS.



WHEN, IN
FACT, YOU'RE
JUST MORE
MEALS FOR
ME TO CONSU--



SHINNKKK



HUULLKKK

WHAT?
SPEAK
UP!

YOU
KNOW WHAT?
NEVER MIND.



SPLOSHHKKK

YOU'VE SAID
ENOUGH.



VERY
GOOD, MY
SERVANT...

"...NOW TAKE CARE OF THE OTHERS."



IT IS WORKING!



WE JUST NEED MORE TIME.

TOO BAD, YOUR TIME'S UP.

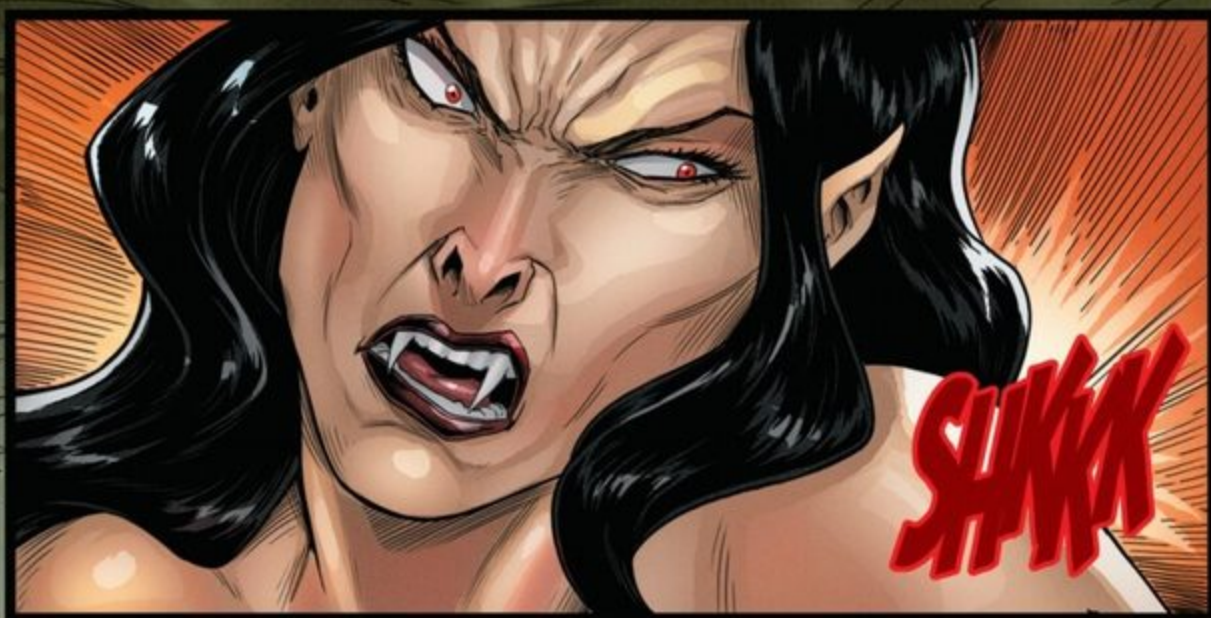


I KNEW WE COULDN'T TRUST THE TWO OF YOU. BUT MARCUS SAID WE NEEDED YOU.



WE DON'T.





AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO HAVE SPECIAL WEAPONS THAT KILL VAMPIRES ON THE SPOT?

THAT WAS ONE OF THEM.

MIGHT NEED MORE R&D.

TELL ME ABOUT IT.



THE INFAMOUS VAMPIRE HUNTER, IS IT? TEAMING UP WITH...THE DEAD KING'S BITCH?

AND I DIDN'T THINK THIS NIGHT COULD GET ANY BETTER.





DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THE RED GOD HAS RISEN. YOU'VE ALREADY LOST.



AND TRYING TO REVIVE THAT DYING HUSK OF A VAMPIRE WILL DO NOTHING.



ARE YOU QUITE FINISHED, LOVE?

THP



GOD, I HOPE THIS WORKS.

BECAUSE I KNOW I'M TIRED OF LISTENING TO YOU.

HOW DA--

KKSHKKK

THAKKO



THAKKO



YOU HAVE MY THANKS, LIESEL.

I KNOW THIS MUST BE... CONFLICTING FOR YOU.

HA. YOU COULD SAY THAT.

LUCY WESTENRA. ONE OF DRACULA'S MOST TRUSTED DISCIPLES BACK IN THE DAY.

I GUESS THEY REMAINED CLOSE OVER THE CENTURIES.

SHE AND I HAVE TANGLED SEVERAL TIMES OVER THE YEARS. FRANKLY, I THOUGHT I KILLED HER THE LAST TIME.*

*SEE VAN HELSING: VAMPIRE HUNTER MINISERIES AND VAN HELSING ANNUAL: BRIDE OF THE NIGHT FOR THE STORIES!



GUESS IT DIDN'T TAKE.

HOW'S HE DOING?

HE IS ALIVE. HEALING SLOWLY.

THIS ONE I DON'T KNOW. BUT CLEARLY SHE'S CLOSE TO DRACULA.

SO, ANY CHANCE YOU GUYS CAN FILL ME IN ON THE PLAN? I KNOW KEEPING DRACULA ALIVE WAS INTEGRAL.

AS A DIRECT DESCENDANT, ONLY DRACULA HAS THE POWER TO DEFEAT VRYKOLAKAS.

AND HE'S BARELY ALIVE.

IS THERE A SECOND OPTION?

NOT REALLY. WE JUST NEED TO MAKE SURE MY FATHER KEEPS BREATHING.

FAIR ENOUGH. NOW--

YOU DISAPPOINT ME.



YOU DESTROY MY ANOINTED SERVANT AND TRY TO SAVE YOUR LITTLE KING.

THIS I WILL NOT ABIDE.

THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD.

NOT GOOD
AT ALL.

AWAKEN, MY
CHILDREN.

AND
KILL THESE
HERETICS.

ARE WE JUST
GOING TO STAND
HERE AND LET HIM
PLAY DAWN OF THE
BLOODY DEAD IN
HERE?

WE
NEED TO DO
SOMETHING!

THP

TSSSS

I TOLD
YOU, IT IS
USELESS
TO ATTACK
HIM.

ALL WE
CAN DO IS
PROTECT THE
KING UNTIL HE
IS READY.





TIMES LIKE THESE MAKE ME WONDER IF I SHOULD HAVE CONSIDERED MY CAREER CHOICES MORE CAREFULLY.

ALONGSIDE BEINGS WHO COULD VAPORIZE ME IF THEY CHOSE TO.

TRYING TO STOP A BLOODY GOD THAT COULD DESTROY US WITH BUT A THOUGHT, BUT CHOOSES TO HAVE OTHERS DO IT.

HE HAS OTHER PLANS.

OUTSIDE OF THESE CATACOMBS.

THHOOOSSHHH

THHOOOSSHHH

UNGH...

NO.

IT MUSTN'T END LIKE THIS.

NEED TO KEEP FIGHTING...



THAT
LIGHT...

..WHERE IS IT
COMING FROM--?



--OH...



VLADIMIR...



ENOUGH.

THOOOSH!!!

LITTLE KING. YOU HAVE BEEN RESURRECTED, I SEE.

NO MATTER. I HAVE WAITED LONG ENOUGH AND AM NOW READY.

I HAVE A WORLD TO CONQUER.

THIS WORLD... DOES NOT WANT YOU.

BE CAREFUL, MY KING. IT IS TOO SOON.

I DO NOT WANT YOU.

AFTER ALL THIS...

...HE'S JUST GOING TO GET HIMSELF KILLED AGAIN?!

SILENCE...

THOOOSH!!!

MAYBE I SPOKE
TOO SOON.

JESUS. HOW
STRONG IS
HE?

HOPEFULLY
STRONG
ENOUGH...

...TO KILL
A GOD.

BUT WHAT
DOES THAT
MAKE HIM?

YOU HAVE
BECOME...
MORE...
LITTLE KING.

YOU ARE
PERFECT.

YOU ARE
MINE.

KSHHHKKKKUUUU

MMMMM...
YES...

NO!
VLADIMIR!
HE'S KILLING
YOU!

WE
MUST STOP
THIS!

THOOOSH!!

SELENE'S ATTACK
DOESN'T TOUCH
THIS THING, BUT
AT LEAST SHE'S
DOING
SOMETHING.

I LOST MY
CROSSBOW
IN THE BLAST,
BUT I'M NOT
HELPLESS.

SHING

NO,
LIESEL! IF
YOU TOUCH HIM
YOU'LL DIE! I
WAS FOOLISH
FOR EVEN
TRYING.

OR
MAYBE
I AM.

SELENE
IS RIGHT.
THERE'S
NOTHING WE
CAN DO.

MAYBE WE
ALL ARE.

OUR
FATE IS IN
MY FATHER'S
HANDS NOW.

LITTLE KING,
YOU ARE TRULY
MY GREATEST
CREATION.

WHEN YOU
ARE FULLY
CONSUMED, I
WILL NEVER
BE BANISHED
AGAIN!

WELL,
THEN.

LET'S PUT
THAT TO THE
TEST, SHALL
WE?

WAIT!
NO! IT'S
TOO
MUCH.

I
CAN'T--

Noooooooooooo!

THAAAAANKKKKKOOOSSSHHHH

UNBELIEVABLE.

QUITE.



MY KING...

...WELCOME HOME.

WE ARE PROUD TO BE YOUR SERVANTS.

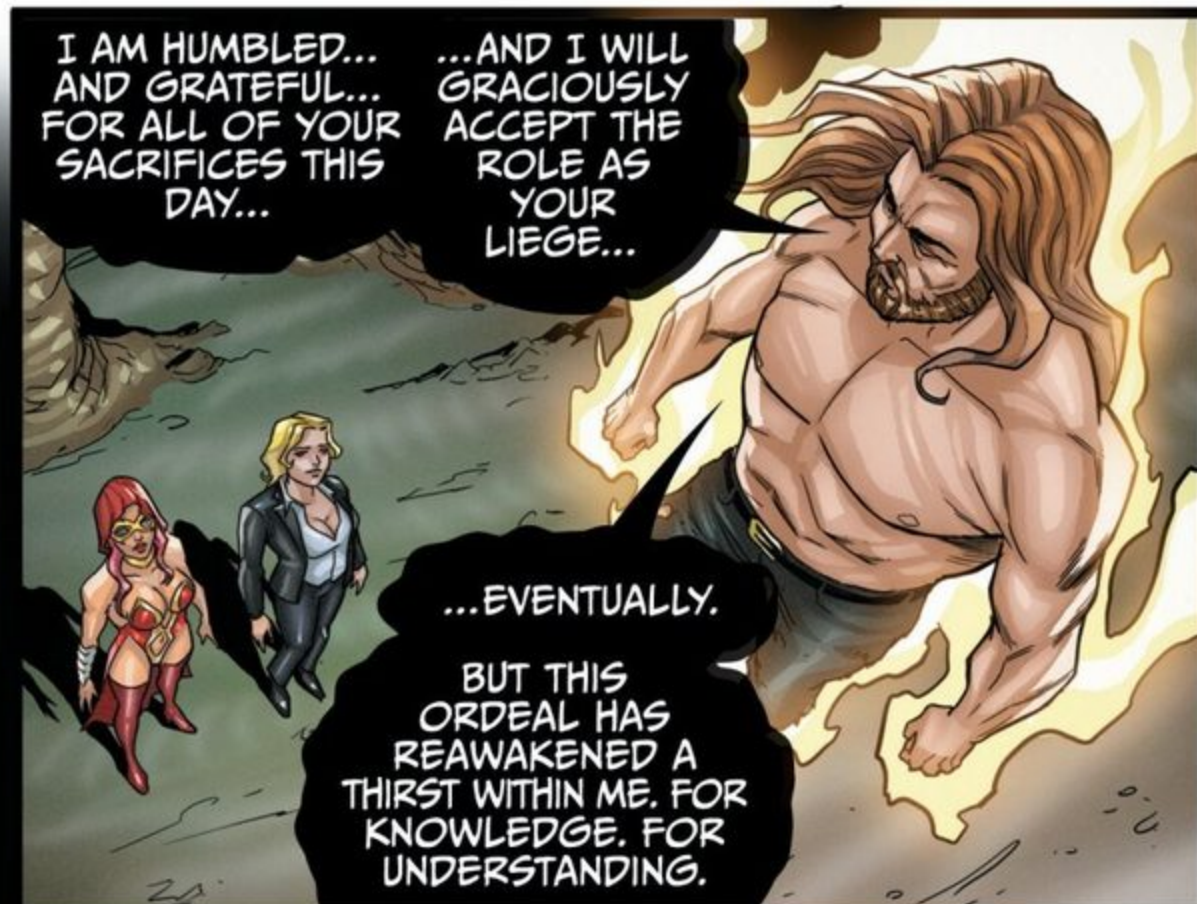


I AM HUMBLLED... AND GRATEFUL... FOR ALL OF YOUR SACRIFICES THIS DAY...

...AND I WILL GRACIOUSLY ACCEPT THE ROLE AS YOUR LIEGE...

...EVENTUALLY.

BUT THIS ORDEAL HAS REAWAKENED A THIRST WITHIN ME. FOR KNOWLEDGE. FOR UNDERSTANDING.



IF I AM TO FIND MY SIGNIFICANCE IN THIS WORLD, I MUST SEEK IT OUT.



FAREWELL. FOR NOW.



GOOD-BYE, FATHER. ONCE MORE.



DRACULA WAS A MAN WHO, LONG AGO, WAS MADE INTO A MONSTER.

NOW HE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT. SOMETHING MORE.

I PROBABLY SHOULD PURSUE HIM, TRY TO TAKE ALL THESE VAMPIRES DOWN. THAT'S WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO.

BUT WE'VE ALL SEEN AND DONE TOO MUCH TODAY ALREADY...



...AND FRANKLY, I NEED A NAP.

SAFE TRAVELS, DRACULA. I HOPE YOU FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

I'M QUITE SURE WE'LL BE MEETING AGAIN...

End

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